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Familiar names and faces join Cougar football coaching staff

Summary: Two familiar names will join the University of Minnesota, Morris football coaching staff this season. Grant Harding and Mark Ekren will work as linebacker coach and special teams and defensive backs coach, respectively.

(August 3, 2007)-Two familiar names will join the University of Minnesota, Morris football coaching staff this season.

Grant Harding, a Sandstone native and a member of the UMM football coaching staff in 2002, will be the linebacker coach and serve as one of the equipment managers in the UMM Athletics Department.

Harding played football for his father, Bruce Harding, and was awarded Athlete of Year at East Central High school. He earned his bachelor's degree in physical education from Hamline University.

Harding started his coaching career at Hamline before coming to UMM in 2002. He also coached at Minot State University, Dakota State University and most recently at Urbana (Ohio) University. Harding is working on completing his master's in education from Minot State University.

A native of Breckenridge, Mark Ekren has been an assistant football and track coach at Morris Area High School since 1989. He will be the Cougars' special teams and defensive backs coach.

Ekren graduated from Valley City State University, earning his bachelor's degree in mathematics and coaching certificate in 1986. Mark was the head football coach at Herman (Minn.) High School from 1986-1988 before becoming the special teams coach and an assistant defensive coach for the Morris Area Tigers. Ekren and his wife, Micki, live in Morris. He has three children.

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